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History, its place in a liberal education



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**HISTORY :**  
**Its Place in a Liberal Education**



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# HISTORY:

## ITS PLACE IN A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

*Address of* PROF. WM. PRESTON JOHNSTON, *of Washington and Lee University, before the Educational Association of Virginia, at Staunton, Va., July 10, 1872.*

The character of this Convention, the importance and difficulty of the subject assigned for discussion, and my inadequacy for the task, might well embarrass me in meeting this audience, were I not encouraged to proceed by the reflection that the most enlightened are the most indulgent, and that as faithful teachers you are aware how little time can be spared from the school to other duties.

You have given me for discussion: "The Place and Importance of the Study of History in a scheme of Liberal Education." It is proper to state that the spirit in which I study and strive to teach, and in which I now address you, is tentative, not dogmatic; and that I shall have accomplished my object here, if my views shall be considered useful or suggestive. I am here as a seeker for truth merely; and if at times my remarks seem to assume a didactic form, I beg you to understand that it is to save time, and multiplied qualifications and limitations of thought not suited to the occasion.

That we may have common ground to stand on, we must first consider the question: "What is History?" The answer should seem most easy; but a comparison of the views of eminent writers shows not only difference, but contradiction, as to the proper subject-matter, ends in view, modes of explication and deductions, of History. Let us consult the oracles. Carlyle calls it, "a looking both before and after." Macaulay seeks to place before us, "a true picture of the life of our ancestors." Arnold calls it, "the

biography of a society," and considers that its object is to trace out that common purpose, which, whether consciously or unconsciously, is the main object of the joint lives of the individuals who compose a society. Grote proposes in his History of Greece to set forth, "Hellenic phenomena as illustrative of Hellenic mind and character;"—to exhibit a general picture, the points of resemblance as well as of contrast with modern society, and the action of the social system. Sir James Stephens, viewing history "as a drama of which retribution is the law, opinion the chief agent, and the improvement and ultimate happiness of our race, the appointed though remote catastrophe," asserts that, "to trace out the progress of public opinion in moulding the character and condition of the nations is the highest office of History." Taine would read as in a mirror, the laws of historical development in individual manifestations; and these again in the unconscious out-cropping of literary endeavor. Michelet epigrammatically says: "Thierry called history narrative; and M. Guizot, analysis. I have named it resurrection, and it will retain the name." With one it is fact and individual man; with another, philosophy; the third strives by force of imagination to summon into life the image of the perished. To these three views of History, or their combinations, all writing or study of History must in the main conform; and yet to my mind they do not convey an exact, clear, and full conception of the idea we seek. You will pardon me therefore if I attempt a definition, which I shall then endeavor to verify: *History is man's true record of whatever is general, important, and ascertained, in the living past of humanity.* In order to measure the value of this definition let us first consider the widest possible meaning that can be attached to the term, the utmost reach and range of the realm of History. There is a record of the past of Humanity, an unblotted Book over whose register Truth keeps an eternal watch. Here are written all past deeds of men, all thoughts, all aspirations; the plans, the labors, the fruitions of the generations; the birth, education, struggles, and extinction of individuals, dynasties, and races; all the past; yes, all, all, all. Here are set down the secret forces that resulted in the Maelstrom of Barbarian invasion; or the more occult laws that guided prehistoric migrations, Aryan, Semitic, or Turanian. Here too the motive, light as dust in the balance, that turned the scale for good or evil in the characters of memorable or forgotten men, is printed with indelible types. Its inscriptions reach a microscopic minuteness in the

moral as in the material world, and again expand to an infinity coëxtensive with the sphere of the human soul. But this self-registered past, this absolute History, is contained in the Book of Life alone; is scanned by the eye of Omniscience only; and to the mind, or memory, or imagination of man is unattainable and incomprehensible.

In our narrower view and parlance then, History is man's record of man. The slender threads of human narrative stretch through the immensity of the Past, as telegraph wires traverse a continent; and like them they link the distant and unknown. But reverse the telescope; view the filaments of thought and action, no longer in comparison with the range of absolute History, but contrasted with the possibility of human acquisition. Measure even the actual accumulation of historical knowledge by what is within the reach of any one intellect, and note the difference. The countless volumes, monumentally ranged in those intellectual cemeteries, the great libraries of the world, defy the patience of the sexton-like bibliographer; the very catalogue of the Babylonish host of authors puzzles the learned with its names. Hence History must be limited by the attainable. To know, to understand, to remember much, we must consent to ignore, to omit, to forget much. We must consign to oblivion all that is trivial and merely personal. We must reject whatever cannot be used as an element in the development of society or of man, or as a symbol for some great moral fact, or as a factor in the elimination of truth.

To know what History is, we must first determine what it is not. It must be discriminated from its auxiliary sciences. All is not History that is valuable to it, that is in aid of it, that tends to it. It does not include man's record of the past of Nature, nor Nature's record of the past of man. The rise of uninhabited coral-reefs and the discovery of fossil men have their appropriate places in science, but History takes no note of them. So with Natural History, including Zoology, Comparative Anatomy, Anthropology, and other sciences of life; though they trench upon the domain of physical man, they do not touch that spiritual nature of which History is the record.

By force of the term, History is of the Past. But it is of the living Past; with the dead Past it has no part nor lot. It says, "This was"; but it says also, "This is." The fact or idea that it declares to us must still subsist, in itself or in its results. If it has perished, or remains as the organism is imprinted in the rock,

then whatever its scientific value, it is still only a fossil, and belongs not to History, but to Archæology. This is the Palæontology of History. It disinters, arranges, classifies, surmises, theorizes: it argues toward History; but not in it, nor of it. It strains human ingenuity to bridge the chasms between isolated facts. Archæology deals not with vital questions; while History must reanimate the body of the times gone by with the true spirit of that age. It is the biography of the living Past that brought forth great ideas and moral forces, impressed them with the seal of beauty, and transmitted them as a sacred and imperishable trust for the generations of men. The researches into the antiquities of Egypt and Nineveh illustrate what is meant by Archæology; the legacies of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman literature have that perennial bloom that belongs to History. The Middle Ages too, with their germs of institutions, principles, and maxims of life, still existing in, or influencing our civilization, are a *living* Past. So of any period that has a personal or national interest to the reader, or is connected by close logical or chronological sequence with the present motive powers of the world. But mere fact however certain, unendowed with moral significance; with no spiritual life, with no continuity of existence, binding it to the Past, Present, and Future; belonging not to the ever-recurring, ever-subsisting I AM which links man with JEHOVAH; loses the eternal essence of Truth and perishes. Though the human historian notes down with painful diligence *dead* facts, Time, the true Nemesis, with gently-obliterating hand, will wipe away "all trivial, fond records," the dross and dust of ages, leaving the thrice purged gold alone behind.

But History treats of a past that not only lives, but was and is *important*. It neglects the useless, the frivolous, the transitory. As Archæology, or the science of earliest, prehistoric things, treats of what has perished; so Palæology, or the science of antiquities, of the minute details of ancient life, investigates and stores away, for its own or for historical purposes, that which is perishable. Stirred by the love of accumulation, not by the love of wisdom, antiquarianism gathers and hoards with the indiscriminating hand of the miser whatever is old, or odd, or curious. The Historic Muse walks through this cabinet, picking here and there a fact, to aid a scenic effect, to verify or confute a statement or hypothesis, or to elucidate an event. Much that is trifling in itself is important in its relations. Slender circumstances furnish wonderful tests of truth. As the armies of Sapor were dispersed by swarms of innu-



merable gnats, so a mighty array of embattled falsehood scatters before a cloud of witnesses, minute, incidental, and undesigned. History therefore takes note of these, but that is all; it must at last define itself by the standard of the permanent, the important, and the general. Even from the narrowest stand-points of historical composition, general interests must necessarily be present to the mind. Herodotus weaves into his web of story the antagonism of Greek and Asiatic. It is as warning or example to a class that the personal or specific is presented. However voluminous and minutely particular, History must perforce leave much unsaid. It is always a series of generalizations.

It is by this same division of general and particular that Biography is set apart from History. More vivid and interesting, teaching the same lessons more directly and in more concrete forms, at once stimulating and gratifying the curiosity and the imagination and pressing home the moral, Biography aids, illustrates, and verifies History; and is indeed the very material out of which it is made. It is the Mother of History. But it differs in this: History is general; while Biography is narrow, partial, and fragmentary. It is also the Interpreter of History. Social and political problems, insoluble by general laws, become plain by the application of individual experience. The exceptional has its place. Kingsley says: "History is the history of men and women and of nothing else." The forces that move society however are not few and simple, but manifold and compound; and social phenomena are not aggregations, but resultants. Hence though the lives of men and women make up so large a part of History, there is also a life of society apart from the lives of its members. For instance, a foreign domination, an alien or usurped government, an enforced polity, produce facts in a country at war with the lives of its inhabitants. We must therefore add to Kingsley's definition, with Arnold; that "History is the biography of a society."

But it is not possible within the limits of this address to do more than suggest the coterminous and auxiliary sciences that cluster about History. Its position is central in the circle of human knowledge; because it is the record and interpretation of man, the central figure of creation. We must discriminate between it and the tangent, intersecting, and included provinces of kindred and subsidiary departments of knowledge. Indeed a thing *must* differ from what only contributes to it. Hence all special histories, whether of Philosophy, Morals, Religion or Law; of Fine Arts]

Useful Arts, or Sciences; and all annals of Towns, Counties or Corporations: in a word, the record of whatsoever does not touch the life of the State, of an independent political Community or self-aggregated and conscious national existence, however valuable as accessory to History, cannot claim its name. In like manner Chronology, Geography, Ethnology, Political Economy, Literary History, the History of Literature, Literature itself, all these are but sections of human learning and manifestations of human activity elucidating the history of a people or of the race. These sciences are the handmaidens of the queenly and star-crowned daughter of Memory, who sits enthroned in the human soul, swaying with double sceptre the realms of fact, and of imagination.

But the most essential criterion of History is its truth. It is the representation of the Real. In the nature of things therefore all fiction must be rejected. Fiction, which is unreal and pictures what is *not*, of course cannot be History, which narrates what is. Fiction, imitating particular events, embodying general truths, stimulating and aiding the imagination, has its uses in the study of History; but it is the figment of man's fancy, not the action of God's creatures; and must be rigorously discriminated from History. If this may be said of what is professedly unreal, it must be said of all that is either consciously or unconsciously false. All forms and phases of falsification vitiate, each in its degree. Its grades, its forms, its sources are multitudinous. In a world where falsehood so prevails, History, resting upon human testimony, must suffer from its corrupting touch. Absolute truth hardly exists in the conception or expression of man. History, then, as a human record, partakes of the error and fallibility of man's nature. Indeed the credibility of all history has been doubted: and yet the truth may be attained; it has been, and on vital matters generally will be, attained. To demand an infallible rule for the settlement of every case, would be to make History the most positive of sciences: when, as it rests chiefly upon human testimony and has for a principal purpose the moral guidance of men, its decisions, like other questions in practical morality, generally can be, and need be, based only upon the preponderance of probabilities. Still there are many facts that, after every test and mode of proof, are pronounced certain. Around these main facts are grouped a number of attendant circumstances which may be considered as finally settled in the minds of men. To narrate this body of fact, to ascertain additional facts, to discuss its bearings upon the progress

of man, and to draw from it fair deductions and set upon these a moral value, are among the offices of History. And here it is sufficient to mention merely the painful siftings of evidence; the slow, careful, and qualified decisions; the rehearings of adjudicated points, the reviews and reversals of decrees and overrulings of established opinions, that mark the calendar of the great Chancery of Time. It is as Explorer, Scribe, Interpreter, and Judge of the Past; as Recorder and Moral Guide of the Present; and as Seer of the Future, that we look up to the venerable form of History.

History, limited to the true and rejecting all that is fictitious and consciously false, must still be discriminated from the unconsciously false, which for lack of a better name, I call Fable. Between pure Fable and scientific History however, lies a debatable ground, which is assigned to the one or the other, according to the theory or the prejudices of the critic. Alluring as this tract has proved to all explorers, time will not permit its investigation to-day; though I will venture to indicate the three sections into which it may be divided. These are Myth, Legend and Tradition; and are thus differentiated. Myth is Fable with its slight alloy of fact unassayed; Tradition is History with its fabulous element uneliminated; while between the two lies Legend with a central core of fact, around which cluster the embellishments of fancy and fiction. Tradition is unwritten, unsifted History. It is the raw material, ascertainable but unascertained, from which the web of history is woven. It is the testimony in each case, hearsay and secondary evidence included, before it has been subjected to the cross-examination and criticism of opposing counsel, to judicial deliberation, and to the large common-sense of that jury we call the world.

Myth, whether originating in hyperbole, in allegory, or in forgotten metaphor; and whether essentially a supernatural romance, a personification of the powers of nature, or, as Max Müller says, "a dialect, an ancient form of speech;" yields even to the most searching analysis but a slight residuum of truth. It seeks to explain the marvellous, by particularizing the general, and embodying the abstract and universal. But Legend, though dealing with prodigy and often cutting the knot of routine by supernatural interposition, is human in its interest. It expands, idealizes, and generalizes the particular; and attempts to assign ideas and facts where they ought *a priori* to belong. It attributes to a favorite hero all words and deeds in keeping with the popular estimate of

him, groups a series of occurrences around a single person or event, and glorifies plain fact with the halo of poetry and the splendors of the imagination.

I have thus detained you in defining, at some length, the meaning of the term History, in the hope that a greater exactness in this regard might not be without its value in considering the place and importance of History in a scheme of liberal education. I have called it: "man's true record of whatever is general, important, and ascertained, in the living Past of Humanity." It is indeed a record, but one a thousand times corrected and revised; and on the scroll are traced in letters of blood and tears the large inductions that humanity has made as its lessons to each man. O mighty Scroll! where in a century the blazon of a line may set down all the truth that is imperishable.

II. DIVISIONS OF HISTORY.—The second great question that arises for consideration is, where the student will find this record inscribed. In what volume is it written? In what book is it registered? Into no one treasury of human knowledge are its riches gathered: its facts and inferences, its truths and illustrations are not collected into any systematic body of history; but are scattered like diamonds in the alluvial drift. The text is wrested from the context: "here a line and there a line." An episode remains in cipher until ingenuity has found the key. A relic or a sign crops out above the surface, where beneath the decay of error, the *debris* of the transitory, and the dust of the trivial, court and colonnade lie buried. But the insatiable thirst for knowledge must be gratified. Patience and skill rescue and preserve remnants and fragments of the truth. In chronicles and annals; in memoirs, biographies, letters, documents, voyages, travels, jest-books, legends, fables, philosophy, literature and science; in the treaties of allies, or the war-messages of angry nations; in the piteous wails of captive princes or humbler prisoners; in the exultant pæans of laureates, or threnodies over the bier of the dead; in satire and eulogy; in all that the cunning hand of the writer has set down or printed; are veiled truths waiting discovery by the wit of man. It is the object of the historian to sift these out; to accumulate, to classify, and to embody in comprehensive and vital form these facts and truths; and thus to set forth conscious, professed History. While the value of these professed histories varies with the subject and treatment; with the aims, ability, industry, and honesty of both author and reader; nevertheless it is in those books that treat pro-

fessedly and distinctively of history that the broadest, clearest, and most direct road opens to its study. As a rule the general student must look for History in Histories. In Hume, Macaulay, and Mahon we must read the story of the English people; in Gibbon's stately procession of the centuries, we must study the passage of Ancient into Modern civilization. But the histories that are the standards of information have been written with purposes so distinct, with objects and aims so different, and under such diverse social, national, and philosophical influences, that to begin the intelligent exploration of one of these, we ought fully to perceive the author's stand-point. It is not hard to say that history, to be a complete record of humanity, should be a reflection of man's nature in its integrity, forgetting neither body, nor mind, nor soul; and that it should describe him both as an individual and as a member of society. But in point of fact authors have usually set before themselves the task either: 1st, of informing and pleasing by the simple narration of events; or 2nd, of adding to this the further moral purpose of instructing man as to his own soul; or 3rd, of instructing society as to institutions, which are the soul of society.

According to the development and tendencies of the epoch in which he has lived, and the temper and theory of the historian, the result of his labors is displayed in the form of Narrative, of Political History or of Sociology; or, as this three-fold division might otherwise be named: of Original History, Formal History, and the Philosophy of History. These divisions, according to the intention of the writer, correspond with the order of the development of historical writing. The earliest writers, or those who select the simpler forms, set down what they have seen, or heard, or read, or known. This plain narration includes many of the sources of history, and is indeed logically and chronologically the primary underlying stratum on which rests the entire mass of other history. It is in the first place biographical; and when biographies are woven into a text by the crossing threads of many lives, a series of historical pictures is produced in which *sequence* is the governing principle. Such is the importance of this biographical element, that Carlyle, with his usual force, says: "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." But the human mind in its effort towards generalization presently takes a step in advance; it describes the life of a nation, and gives the remarkable events in its career. This phase, in which History begins to

reflect and compare, soon passes from mere Chronicle with its implicit teachings, to the consideration of principles and the didactic purpose of inculcating moral lessons. It is the confluence of Narrative and Moral Philosophy; and, as Prof. Seeley remarks, it deals "with phenomena of a certain kind and these include political institutions." The Historic faculty, developing, attempts to collate these phenomena, to discover the laws regulating them, and to deduce from them the principles applicable to the movement of political bodies. No longer satisfied with the simple sensations of mere sequence, it seeks for a constant exhibition of cause and effect, though it does not yet look beyond immediate causes. One more stage and the critical spirit produces Scientific History. With more rigid methods of investigation, and severer standards of credibility than controlled the older writers, Niebuhr and his school have established this science, which is indeed the History of History.

Finally the thinker, now striving to apprehend first causes and the obscurest mysteries of human existence, generalizes the facts, institutions, and phenomena of the Past, to discover *law* in the succession of historic events and in the movement of the human mind. Such is the origin of the Philosophy of History. We have a right to assume, hypothetically at least, from the analogies of the physical cosmos, that order exists in the Moral as in the Material Universe, that there is a Plan of Providence,—that a Divine law prevails in History as elsewhere. To discover the workings of this law in whole or in its parts, to trace the development of man and society, to disclose order, adaptation, and causation in the progress of humanity under superintending Wisdom and Beneficence, is the noble and fascinating province of the Philosophy of History.

But History has its spurious, as well as its true Philosophy; and the difference is immense. The former, framing a theory on the basis of a few bold generalizations, ignores the limits of the knowable, and confidently settles the destiny of man and society. The latter, by methods strictly scientific and historical, proceeds cautiously to fix its data and thence to ascertain a few definite and unquestionable truths. It does not evolve gorgeous pageants of the future from its inner consciousness, but admits its own fallibility in the solution of problems involving both God and man. As for instance, when it sees a nation abiding for a time and then perishing from the earth, with no larger legacy apparently to humanity than the dead infant leaves, or with the thread of its exist-

ence broken by violence or severed by the sword, History does not pronounce its career fragmentary or its mission unfulfilled, for it recognizes that in the scope of Omniscience these may have been rounded to a perfect close. We must pursue the same methods with the History of Humanity that we do with the biography of a society or of a man. Yet, on the other hand, in the accomplished destiny of the great historic Races, a true philosophy discerns parts of a purpose, and establishes propositions that serve as columns, as yet too slender and too few, on which will rise the splendid dome of the Science of Man.

While I have thus described to you the successive objects and forms of historical effort, it has not been with the purpose of preferring the one to the other in dignity or in intrinsic value. All are necessary to a complete conception of History. Narrative, with its concrete examples for the culture of the soul; Formal History, with its practical lessons of statesmanship; and the Philosophy of History, with its abstract truths in social science, reflect with their revolving mirrors the many-sidedness of life; and, when combined as well as included in a scheme of historical study, present a full record of the Past of Humanity.

III. But what is the place and importance of History in a scheme of liberal education? If History is such as I have described it, if its outlooks for the soul and active powers of man have not been unduly magnified, then its importance is co-extensive with human interests; and its place in a scheme of liberal education,—why it *is* a liberal education. But lest this claim shall be considered arrogant for what I have called the *central* study in the realm of knowledge, let me so far qualify it as to admit that no man can know any one thing well who does not know many things well, and that the man of broadest culture should be the best in his own speciality; even as Barrow's Greek and Mathematics went to make him the pithiest preacher in the English tongue, and Bacon's Latin and Logic and Law helped to hammer him into the profoundest of philosophers. The study and teachings of History must be so co-ordinated with the other gymnastic and informing arts, sciences, and philosophies that fill out the time allotted to the student, as to occupy no disproportionate position. The best methods of instruction, the objects to be attained, and the textbooks to be used, during each phase of progress in Historical education, with other important questions directly springing from or suggested by the theme propounded to me, have been duly

considered, and might be elaborated here to-day, were it not for a recent professional experience. At the end of one of my courses of lectures I unbosomed myself to my assembled class in the following terms: "I have now, gentlemen, completed a course of twenty lectures on the *preparation* necessary to an orator. If any gentleman wishes the Art of Oratory *finished* in one hundred lectures more, he will please rise." Not one student had the strength of mind or body to rise to the occasion. I accept the moral, and will not test the politeness of my audience by asking, whether I shall take from my portfolio a hundred pages or so of manuscript on these topics. I will however claim your indulgence for a few remarks in regard to the *teaching of History*.

In that symmetrical adjustment of moral and intellectual forces necessary for self-culture, termed a liberal education, the chief offices of History are, 1st, to store the mind with information; and, 2nd, to stimulate and regulate the imagination; with a third incidental duty of disciplining the intellectual faculties. While History enriches and kindles the mind, it only indirectly trains it. It does not follow however that it should be postponed to gymnastic studies. As swimming is best learned in the water, so the processes of the understanding find matter and resistance in that moral element of which History supplies so large a part. Now then, while the indirect benefits of History need not be neglected in its instruction, still its principal functions must be kept clearly in view. And first the skillful teacher must awaken interest, must call into vigorous action the imagination, must arouse the mind of the pupil by the presentation of the wonderful. For this purpose he must follow the analogy of historical production; and as the childhood of nations listens with large-eyed wonder to Myth only, so the craving of the individual child for the Fairy-tales of History must not be denied. Here the Historic faculty has its birth. When it has come into being, it soon gains vigor for the strong meat of reason, criticism, and philosophy. What the Wonderful lacks in historic value is more than compensated by its literary worth. It penetrates every where, fructifies in poetry, and blooms in the illustrations of science. The great writers have interwoven familiar myths and legends, by citation, allusion, and metaphor, into the texture of their language and the very fabric of their thought. The Daphne, the Narcissus, and the Hyacinth blossom in our gardens; the great gods of Olympus still rule the planets; and the lesser deities give name to asteroids, distant stars, and glitter-



ing constellations. We can not call it History, yet it is still Literature; it is still the haunted grove through whose dim aisles lead the approach to the stately Temple of History.

Story books of History and lives of great men are a fitter and more philosophical introduction to the study of History than those elementary manuals that combine barren lists of condensed facts and naked dates with a shadowy sketch of men and events. Abridgments and summaries are but dry chips of knowledge to the eager appetite of youth. Outlines try to give everything, and give nothing complete. While some manuals may not be open to these censures, the teacher for the most part will have to remedy their most obvious defects: as a live man he must supply the lacking vitality, and as a true man, point out the errors of his text-book.

The teacher will observe his pupil gradually demanding more rigid tests of verity, and fuller proof of what are called the facts of History. He is now ready for the acquirement of Formal History; and soon becomes so for that of Scientific History. But there is no period of life or scholarly attainment when he can afford to neglect the vivid and stirring side of the Past, where men and women move and talk and act as they do upon the theatre of actual life.

In this more advanced stage of Historical Study it is necessary to adjust fully in the mind of the learner the relations of time and space. Chronology serves as a skeleton for the living tissues of History, without which it is shapeless or distorted. But History is human action in space as well as in time. The characters, and hence the deeds, of men and races, are modified by external conditions. Climate, soil, production, geographical location and configuration, and other like circumstances, influence the habits and career of a people. Governmental policy, even the national life, is often moulded by the nature and extent of territorial possession. Thus there is significance in John Mitchell's sneer at England: "that it is no longer a European power; but a universal, intertropical, circumpolar, double-hemispherical Power." By means then of Chronology and Geography, by co-ordination in time and space, History acquires the definiteness of contemporary transactions and is realized to the mind's eye.

Critical History must be read; but not always, nor necessarily, critically. Quantity, range, and variety are needed, and should be allowed; but the student often requires the curb, as well as the spur. If encouraged, or permitted, he will read widely and ex-

haustively. His wanderings may be devious, far from that hard, straight, Appian way prescribed by authority; but his light footstep will sometimes lead him to recesses where the grand Historian's stately chariot has never rolled.

So vast is the area to be surveyed, and so little does the student accomplish who masters all that the universities require, that the thought arises whether this study might not be deferred till after-life. The answer is, that so great a mass of information demands distribution over an entire life-time; and that early youth and mature manhood, as well as a fair proportion of the college course, must share in its acquisition. In college, too, the literary tastes are formed; and that Historic sense must be cultivated without which information is of small avail.

As all History cannot be learned, the question comes up, to what segment of it we ought to devote our attention. Without attempting a direct reply, it may be well to remember that Ancient History has its chief value in the simplicity of its problems, and the certainty of its conclusions. The unmixed questions of Humanity are put and answered. The mind, duly trained through such processes to a larger generalization, is at last able to grapple with the complexity of Modern History, to eliminate truth from its multitudinous factors, and to pursue the tangled skein of metaphysical or political analysis to remote, but attainable, conclusions. Contemporary History, on the other hand, has the advantage of directness of teaching. Its accents are clearly audible, because they fall from living lips. Its complexity compels a more stringent mental discipline than the simpler forms of antiquity. Its suggestiveness and immediate applicability excite the spirit of inquiry. Prof. Seeley says, "the text should be put before the commentary, the present before the past." I waive on this occasion this vexed question, satisfied with stating the importance of each of the two branches of history.

Our own history is, of course, the most important to us, and if the education is so partial and fragmentary that only a little history can be learned, that little should be one's own. But this view is not consistent with the conception of a liberal education, and may be omitted. In a complete and rounded scheme, our own history having a practical value as that to which all our knowledge of historical science may be applied, even if it has been studied first, should also be studied *last*. When we come to study it, this difficulty will impede us: that no full or fair history of our

country has yet been written. To know it aright we must go to original sources; biography, documents, letters, travels; even to tradition, less uncertain than the printed page of partisan hate; but especially must we go the Constitution and the contemporary expositions of its framers. We must witness with the second sight of the soul—the divine power of imagination—the genesis of institutions, that by the growth of centuries have become heart of oak, that have been hardened in fire and blood by our English ancestry, and that have been transmitted to us as an inalienable legacy. And lastly, we must breathe with a full inspiration that liberal air of British freedom that vitalized the life-blood of our institutions.

You, teachers! does it not stir your blood, in the dull routine of daily duty, to know that, as torch-bearers of liberty, you may hand down from sire to son the quenchless flame, the memory of an immortal past; and to feel that no epoch of that past blazes with a fuller splendor than this, whose history you have not read but have helped to make!

As you tell the story of our contemporary history to the offspring of heroes, you can draw from your knowledge of the past a multitude of precedents, teaching patience, fortitude, moderation, magnanimity. You can point to the moral bankruptcies of the worldly-wise—the failure of bigotry and persecution as moral agencies—the certainty of national retribution for national crimes—and a thousand other lessons of priceless value, to fortify the heart for the practice of virtue. In every catastrophe you can enable a generous youth to read that disaster warrants not despair, and that an overruling Providence wrests the purposes of evil to good results. Thus can their awakened vision be led to behold in History the consummation of the Divine Will, setting at naught the puppets of the Play, and unfolding the secret Plot of Providence, when Victory shall mourn her poisoned laurels, and Defeat obliterate with tears the record of her errors.







Gaylord

PAMPHLET BINDER

Syracuse, N. Y.

Stockton, Calif.

